



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**AFGHANISTAN**

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

November 30-December 15, 2008

### HEALTH



Mullahs learned how to improve family health in accordance with the Holy Koran.

PHOTO: USAID/COMPRI-A

#### **Religious Leaders Teach Reproductive Health:**

Afghanistan has one of the world's highest rates of infant and maternal mortality. Despite cultural taboos surrounding family planning, USAID helped boost awareness this year by training 288 religious leaders in ten of Afghanistan's most popular mosques. The influential leaders learned to provide accurate information about maternal and child health and the products which could save their lives.

After their training, religious leaders communicated these vital health messages in the country's mosques, taking great care to teach about child and maternal health in accordance with the Holy Koran. Their lessons were supported with the distribution of over 200,000 products and health literature at the mosques.

Follow-up surveys show that the teachings of the Mullahs and Imams, heard by an estimated 8.1 million people, resulted in substantially better sales of reproductive health products at local pharmacies and groceries. Efforts like these lead to stronger, healthier families and help prevent the tragic loss of life in Afghanistan.

### GENDER DEVELOPMENT

**Mothers help Daughters Explore their Future:** Afghan women represent an important force for change in the country's politics and society. To celebrate their achievements, the U.S. embassy recently hosted an event for twenty Afghan mothers and their daughters. The professional women were honored for their triumph in overcoming hardship to make a difference for their country.

Participants spoke candidly about their professions, family life, and hope for Afghanistan. One woman described the obstacles she had to overcome in her life. "The Taliban told me I couldn't be a judge because I am a woman," she said. "Look, here, now I am a judge in the counter-narcotics court, which is very difficult." A 12-year old girl also gave a speech on her view of her mother's career and her belief in her own abilities, announcing her ambition to run for president one day.



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"I think that, as women, the most important thing we crave is *choice*," said USAID representative Sarah-Ann Lynch, speaking to participants. "And, with choices, we will make the best decision for our family and personal situation."

### AGRICULTURE AND ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT

#### **Water-Saving Technology in Drought-burdened**

**Afghanistan:** Since 1999, Afghanistan has suffered from a severe drought. As the country tries to rebuild after years of war, scarce water makes feeding families and renewing lives even more difficult.

USAID is committed to helping Afghan farmers combat the drought through better irrigation techniques. Recently, USAID introduced a new, water saving technology in Afghanistan called the Hydroflume Water Delivery System. The system provides a tube which irrigates fields without losing the valuable water to evaporation or wasting it on non-fertile soil. This technology is particularly helpful to Afghan farmers who have traditionally watered their crops by flooding their fields and unwittingly wasted the life-giving water.



The new irrigation technique was introduced to Afghan farmers at Badam Bagh farm in Kabul.

PHOTO: USAID/ASAP

The new system has been set up at USAID's Badam Bagh demonstration farm in Kabul and will be demonstrated to visitors. USAID is also working on a plan to sell the new system through agriculture stores across the country, making this affordable resource available to Afghan farmers in rural areas.

### INFRASTRUCTURE

**Kandahar's Residents Gain More Electricity:** The residents of Kandahar City, in southern Afghanistan, are ambitious about rebuilding their homes and businesses. Until recently, the city relied on a small, local power station for most of its energy. But, as Kandahar city began to thrive again, the residents needed more power than the station could provide.

USAID, with the Ministry of Energy and Water, responded by building a new 9 MW diesel power plant, significantly increasing the available energy in Kandahar. Five generators were trucked in from Kabul to power the station, and workers purchased and installed new equipment and built new fuel lines and electrical connections.



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According to Fazal Ahmad, Kandahar Power Manager, "This power plant will have an immediate effect on many people's lives here in Kandahar. The power will ultimately benefit some 9,000 families, plus numerous small business and industrial enterprises."

## ECONOMIC GROWTH

**Afghan Businesses see new Opportunities in India:** Over the past few years, Afghans have worked hard to rebuild their economy, eager to show the world how much the country has to offer. This November, USAID helped Afghan businesses promote their fruits and handicrafts at the 28<sup>th</sup> Annual India International Trade Fair. Vendors not only introduced their goods to new markets, but built promising new business relationships with Indian buyers. Last year, the same fair led to direct sales of \$3.5 million and business contracts of \$8 million for Afghan businesses. This year, it is estimated that gross sales for Afghan vendors ranged from \$10,000 – \$15,000 per day at the 14-day event and Afghan exporters signed even more business contracts.

Speaking about the importance of Afghanistan's participation at the trade fair, Mr. Haji Hassan, a participating vendor at the event, said that, "Participation in these trade fairs helps us to expand our production back home, encouraging the growth of the private sector in Afghanistan."